

Mr. Cready (B. W.)

MEMORIAL

TO

JOHN A. SWETT, M.D.



MEMOIR

JOHN A. SWETT, M.D.

B. H. WILSON, M.D.

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN A. SWETT, M.D.,

LATE

PROFESSOR OF THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN THE MEDICAL
DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY, OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK;
PHYSICIAN OF THE NEW YORK HOSPITAL, ETC.

BY

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MEMOIR OF DR. SWETT.

For the second time Gentlemen since, twenty-two years ago, our Society was first constituted, Death has been among us. He who fitly commemorated the virtues of MacDonald is himself a subject for the biographer. He has been taken away, not when coming age had dulled the current of his blood and blunted the energy of his mind, but in the prime of his manhood, in the full vigor of his intellect, at a time when the stores of knowledge slowly heaped up by study and labor were just become most available for the instruction and benefit of others. Had life and health been longer spared him, he would doubtless have attained a wider usefulness, a loftier reputation,—but he could not have had a higher place in our esteem, a stronger hold upon our affections. To most of us he had been known since the time, when, filled with high pur-

poses and youthful enthusiasm, he first commenced the practice of his profession. He was one of the founders of our Society, one of the most constant in attendance, of its members. Here were all his old friends. He had grown up with us, and we with him. He was associated with our early struggles and our early triumphs. We knew him, his undeviating truth, his strict integrity, his kindly heart, his clear understanding, his sound judgment. His course, successful as it had been, had provoked no envy, had given rise to no heart-burning. In the world his place if not soon filled, will soon be occupied:—not so here. To many of us no new ties can weave themselves so closely around our hearts, as those formed in our youth; no new friendship have the firmness imparted by the knowledge and trials of a lifetime. Here his memory will not soon fade. May it teach us to emulate his example.

JOHN APPLETON SWETT was on both sides of unmixed English descent. His ancestors belonged to that remarkable body of men whose enduring courage, firm love of civil liberty, and exalted and sincere, if somewhat narrow, spirit of piety, laid broad and deep the foundations of order and prosperity in New England. On his father's side, two brothers named Swett, landed at Newburyport, Mass., about the year 1653, and settled at that place. In the

latter part of the seventeenth century a part of the family emigrated to Exeter, New Hampshire, and of this branch Dr. Swett was a descendant. His grandfather again emigrated to what at that time was the District of Maine, where he finally settled in Parsonsfield, situated in what is now called York County. The members of the family appear to have been mainly plain yeomen, living upon their own land which their own hands cultivated.

Dr. Swett's mother was an Appleton, and a descendant in the direct line from Samuel Appleton, who emigrated from England in the year 1650, and settled at Ipswich, Mass., where he had a grant of lands from the authorities of the province. The Appletons, as is set forth at length in the Appleton memorial, were probably of Norman origin, and bore in their coat of arms "a fesse sable between three apples gules, stalked and leaved vert," with the punning motto "Ex malo, bonus." The most noticeable man among them in this country, appears to have been Major Samuel Appleton, who came to New England a child, with his father. He seems to have been a strong-minded, stout-hearted, old puritan, and distinguished himself equally in the war against King Philip and by his opposition to the tyrannical government of Sir Edmund Andros. The family throughout was an eminently respectable one,

rich in reputable and well-to-do yeomen, orthodox divines, and careful and substantial traders.

While still a youth, Dr. Swett's father met with an accidental injury, the consequences of which unfitted him for the severe labors of the farm; this led to his entering into trade, first as a clerk in a country store, and subsequently in Boston. Here we at an early period find him in business on his own account as a merchant. He was an active, energetic man, who placed a high estimate upon his calling, and had little sympathy with tastes or pursuits unconnected with it. He had much strong sense, with a vein of that dry humor common to New England men. Growing wealth, and the natural desire to learn something of the history of their families, had caused genealogical inquiries to become common in New England; and among others, some of the Swetts' were desirous to trace out their genealogical tree, and to remove the dust which obscured their ancestral coat of arms. Mr. S. was applied to for concurrence and assistance, but he refused to have any thing to do with the matter. He had traced back his family to a very respectable shoemaker, and he was determined to stop there. He stood upon the cobbler.

Dr. Swett's mother is described as an admirable woman, of clear, bright mind, with a loving heart,

open to all kindly and generous sympathies. She was deeply imbued with religious feeling, and in this as well as in other things, her views exercised a strong influence upon her son.

John A. Swett was born in Boston in Dec. 1808. His early education was received at the Boston grammar school, of which Mr. Benjamin A. Gould, known as the editor of an edition of Virgil, and subsequently a merchant of Boston, was at that time principal. In the earlier part of his school career, young Swett was by no means remarkable for his attention to his studies. He was fond of reading, but found Fielding and Smollett more to his taste than the Commentaries of Cæsar or the Georgics of Virgil, and had frequently to be reproved for his negligence. At length, interested in his novel, he took it with him, and keeping it partially covered by his Latin book, read it surreptitiously during school hours. His unwonted application soon attracted the attention of his teacher, and he publicly complimented him upon the change in his conduct, and promised a speedy promotion in his class as its reward. Ashamed of the unmerited praise, and still more ashamed of the deception by which it was gained, the boy as soon as possible threw the book into his desk and never again opened it. From that time he was assiduous at his studies, and when

a year or two afterward he left school, he had attained a high rank in his class. Thus early did he show that hatred and contempt of all falsehood, which formed so marked a feature of his character.

After leaving school young Swett entered Harvard University, where he made the usual terms, graduating in 1828. He held a fair rank in his class, and would have obtained a higher one, had it not been for his neglect of his mathematical studies. He had no taste for algebra or geometry, and resolutely ignored them while at college, refusing to bend his mind to a pursuit for which he had an invincible dislike. On graduating, he commenced the study of medicine in the office of Dr. Jacob Bigelow, of Boston, at that time as now, professor of *Materia Medica* in the Harvard Medical School, and in 1831 obtained his diploma. Shortly afterward, while still undecided as to the place he should fix upon, in which to await the slow and uncertain advent of practice, he paid a visit to New York. He soon made up his mind that this was the proper field for him, and against the wishes of his father, who naturally desired to have his son near him, he took a small office at the corner of Broadway and Duane street, and commenced the career of a physician in a great city, with but small means and a slender connection. He early became connected with the City

Dispensary, at that time the only institution of the kind in New York. Drs. John Watson, Adams, Buck and Bulkley, were then attached to the same institution, all young, and ardent in the pursuit of professional knowledge. Frequently seeing each other, and mutually communicating the results of their observations, they, in the winter of '33-34, formed themselves into a society which held regular meetings at the Dispensary. An essay was read by one of the members, and the remainder of the evening was occupied by the detail and discussion of such cases of interest as had been met with since the preceding meeting.

Dr. Swett's father, who had subsequently removed to New York, died on the 14th of November, 1834. By this means the Doctor came into the possession of a small property. Longing for professional improvement, and for an instruction larger and more exact than could be obtained here, he determined to visit Europe; and the following May, having obtained the reluctant consent of his mother, he sailed for Liverpool. He landed in England on the 12th of June, 1835, and after a hasty run through a part of that country, reached Paris on the 13th of July. Here he remained until the 5th of November of the following year, with the exception of six or eight weeks, occupied by a pedestrian excursion in

Switzerland. Dr. Swett's residence in Paris formed an era in his life, and he always looked back to it with pleasure, as the period in which he had made the greatest and most rapid advances in professional knowledge. He did not deny himself any of the ordinary pleasures of that great capital, but wherever the evening might be spent, whether at the theatre, the opera, in the society of his friends, or in his study, six o'clock of the next morning, the hour during the winter of the visit, always found him at the hospital. Among the hospital physicians, Louis was his favorite, not alone from the subjects to which he more especially devoted himself, but from the simplicity of character, the strong reliance upon facts, and the scrupulous regard for truth, of that great physician. Not only was Swett himself attentive to his studies, but, both by example, and where intimacy gave him the right, by advice and remonstrance, he kept others in the path of duty, and saved them from being utterly carried away by the seductions by which they were surrounded. "I early became acquainted with Swett," says one afterward among the most intimate of his friends, "and he soon acquired an influence over me. Like other young men in a strange place, and living with young men alone, I was in danger of losing, in pursuit of pleasure, the time which should have been de-

voted to study; but Swett saved me. He carried me off to the hospital, and he saw that I attended punctually. No excuse but sickness would answer. Whatever were the amusements of the evening, the morning must find us at La Pitié with Louis.

There is another and more touching evidence in existence, of the influence which Swett exerted upon those around him while in Paris. Among those he there became acquainted with, was the late Dr. Power, of Baltimore. Attending the same hospital, studying the same class of diseases, an intimacy sprang up, which became strengthened into friendship, and terminated only with life. While lying on his death-bed, availing himself of a transient interval of ease, Power wrote to his old friend a letter, which even now, and by a stranger to the parties, can scarce be read without tears. After giving a graphic, but terrible account of the symptoms of the disease from which he was suffering, consumption, with harassing cough, constant dyspnœa, and great pleuritic pain, Dr. Power adverts to the hopes that consoled, and the belief that supported him under his suffering, and then goes on thus to allude to their early intimacy: "Among the many blessings of my past life, I have not only lately, but at all times for the last fifteen years, esteemed my lucky

meeting with you, the first morning I went to Louis's wards. Without any settled plan of study myself, without any acquaintances among the students of Paris—young, impulsive, self-confident—I might have fallen in with different companions, and my whole life have been different. Had it been B——, I might have taken to cards and brandy and water. Had it been N——, I might have taken to grisettes; had it been M——, I might have taken to dressing, idling, or fifty other suppositions, equally likely; but, in the good providence of God, it was you, and I took to study—how faithfully you know. I conceived an intense respect for you, and the fear of your disapprobation often made me work when tempted to do otherwise. We were, Heaven knows, very different men, and yet a friendship sprang up between us, never shaded by a moment's cloud; it has been my pride and pleasure thenceforth to claim you as a friend, and a true friend you have proved to me. If, in my brief career, I have been of any use to others—have been, in any way, an ornament to my profession, I feel, old fellow, how great a share of it is owing to you; and, though neither of us were saints, yet, considering our temptations, we have reason to thank God we were no worse. Nor can I blame you ever for leading me into temptation, but, on the contrary, you often restrained me, and your

whole moral influence over me was for good. I wanted to thank you for this; it was on my conscience, and, therefore, I have often felt so anxious to write you once more."

During his residence abroad, Dr. Swett kept a journal evidently intended only for his own inspection, and of the existence of which his most intimate friends, until after his death, were unaware. It is occupied chiefly with the places he visited, the distinguished persons he met with, the works of art that he saw; his studies and labors are only incidentally mentioned. Here and there it gives us glimpses of his inner life, of his manner of thought, and habit of self-examination. At Geneva he writes, "A year ago to-day, a poor solitary devil entered Paris, destined to be exposed to its thousand temptations, its pleasures, and its vices, with nothing to save him, but his skepticism on the one hand and his strong love of his profession on the other; a year, with its full experience, has gone by, and he finds himself in the romantic city of Geneva, in Switzerland, the land of beauty and of grandeur, meditating on the past with feelings in which pleasure and pain occupy an equal share. Ah! my dear mother! you felt indeed in the silent parting moment, that separated us for so long an interval, that your son was to be thrown alone into the great world, with nothing

to guide him but the fear of God and your love. May I, during my present excursion amid the proud monuments of nature, find myself elevated into a purer atmosphere of feeling, and return home to my quiet pursuits with the reflection of a month well spent—rare reflection to those who study and estimate their own hearts.”

Dr. Swett left Paris with regret. The progress he had made in his profession, the friendships he had formed, the pleasures which youth and health enabled him to enjoy, and which derived an increased zest from the hard study from which they had been stolen, rendered his residence there a happy period of his life. During his tour in Switzerland, he writes, “I often wonder at the strong attachment I feel for Paris; I never leave it for a day without experiencing that sensation of inward pleasure which one feels when returning to his home. Wherever I go I cling to the French society. I love their manners, the tone of their feelings, their liberality of spirit. Above all, I have spent one of the happiest, and, certainly, one of the most useful years of my life in it.” It was then with mingled feelings, that after an absence of seventeen months, he again turned his face towards the land of his birth, and prepared, with added advantages, to resume the practice of his profession.

Soon after his return, Dr. Swett became again

connected with the New York Dispensary. In the autumn of the next year, while busily engaged in consequence of the epidemic prevalence of typhoid fever in the district which he attended, he was attacked with fever, and suffered a long and dangerous illness. In the spring of '38, Dr. Swett made his first appearance as a lecturer. An association, consisting of Drs. Watson, Bulkley, Swett, Post, Adams, Buck, Macdonald, and Beales, had been formed for the purpose of giving an extra academical course of lectures upon special subjects. From the situation of the building in which they were given (a Dispensary for the treatment of diseases of the skin originated by Drs. Bulkley and Watson), the association took the name of the Broome street School of Medicine. Dr. Swett lectured on diseases of the chest. The association lasted through two years, a spring and fall course of lectures being delivered. Though then given up as a separate organization, it led to the establishment of a spring course of lectures in the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Crosby street, several of the members of the Broome street School taking part in the course there delivered. Among these was Dr. Swett. The lectures which he delivered there were stenographed by the late Dr. J. A. Houston, and published by him in the New York Lancet, of which he was the editor. Being

extensively circulated, these lectures did much to enhance the growing reputation of Dr. Swett, and bring him into repute as an authority on the subject of which they treat.

The society which we have seen originated at the Dispensary had been broken up by the lukewarmness of some of its members, and by the absence of others in Europe. In the fall of 1836, the New York Medical and Surgical Society was organized on the basis of the old Dispensary Society, and for a long time held its meetings at the New York Hospital. A number of valuable and interesting papers having been accumulated by its labors, and there being no proper organ of the profession at that time in the city, it was resolved to commence a journal under its auspices. Drs. Swett and Watson were unanimously selected as editors to conduct the new enterprise. The journal appeared quarterly for two years, under the name of the New York Medical and Surgical Journal, when, owing mainly to the publisher having fallen into pecuniary difficulties, it was abandoned.

In 1842, one great object of Dr. Swett's ambition was attained; he was elected one of the physicians of the New York Hospital, in the place of Dr. Macdonald. Seldom has an appointment been made with greater unanimity on the part of the gov-

ernors, and never has one been received with more satisfaction by the profession. The Hospital was thenceforth the chief theatre of Dr. Swett's labors, and he devoted himself to his new duties with a zeal and enthusiasm, which did not flag even under the pressure of increased occupation and decaying health. He delivered repeated courses of lectures there upon diseases of the chest and of the kidneys; and his instructions at the bedside attracted a crowd of students who had hitherto been strangers to the medical wards of the institution. Above all, it was his field of study; the literature of the profession he may have underrated, but upon clinical observation he set the highest value, and to this he assiduously devoted himself. His enlarged opportunities led him to a minuter investigation of the diseases of the kidneys, and the manner he set about this was highly characteristic of his conscientious thoroughness. He first went through a private course of instruction with Mr. Reed at the hospital, upon the chemistry of the urine, and for a long time his friends on visiting him would find him busy in a room, which he had fitted up with the necessary apparatus, working out for himself the more important points in the chemical history of that complex fluid. But his means of investigation were not complete without the microscope, and to the microscope he next applied himself.

A new and laborious course of observations was entered on, and earnestly and steadily he devoted himself to it. Compelled, as will be seen hereafter, to make a short visit to Paris in 1850, in order to recruit his impaired health, he found time to go through a private course of microscopy with Robin; and a medical friend who accompanied him, states that he worked with all the zeal of a young student; and when, at length, worn down by long illness, and ready to die, perhaps the last professional object which attracted his attention, was a magnificent new microscope which he had just received from England.

On the 1st of August, 1849, Dr. Swett was married to Martha, the daughter of the late Dr. Dale, of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

In 1852, he published his treatise on diseases of the chest, the work on which his reputation with the public must mainly rest. The clearness of its method, the accuracy of its descriptions of disease, and the soundness of its pathological and therapeutical doctrines, must long render it a favorite with students and with the profession.

In the spring of the following year, he was appointed professor of the theory and practice of physic in the medical department of the University of the city of New York. So far as professional honors were concerned, he had now attained the summit of

his wishes. Early in life he had proposed two ends in his professional career ; to become one of the physicians of the New York Hospital, and to become an authorized teacher of medicine. Both his aims at length were accomplished. His careful preparation was now to bear its fruit. A new and honorable career of usefulness lay open before him,—but clouds and darkness were gathering upon his path, and the shadow of death was slowly creeping over him.

In the spring of '53, he delivered at the University a course of lectures and demonstrations on the diseases of the kidney. The termination of these lectures and of his term of hospital duty, found him broken down and exhausted. Yet notwithstanding his feeble health, he set himself resolutely to prepare for his course of the ensuing winter. And this preparation demanded no trifling amount of labor. Part of the ground to be sure he was already familiar with, but much remained to be thought over, studied out, and rearranged. His mode of proceeding was not to have recourse to text-books and authorities, but to collect from every source, whether journals or special treatises, all the cases he could find of the disease under consideration ; and then by analyzing, comparing, and studying these, to enlarge and correct the knowledge he had acquired by his own experience. He did not write out a course of

lectures, but the results of his labors were noted down, and he trusted in the lecture-room, to his power of extemporaneous expression. The opening of the college found him with a measure of health and vigor which enabled him to perform his new duties, and to this, mental excitement and the pleasure he took in lecturing, greatly contributed. He lectured to the satisfaction of a large class, as well as to that of a more difficult and discriminating judge, himself. The approach of spring found him feeble and ailing, yet he still struggled on, getting through his visit at the Hospital, and remaining exhausted for the rest of the day. Toward the latter part of May he was compelled to yield, to forego the exercise of his profession, never again to resume it.

The illness which terminated Dr. Swett's life, dates as far back as the spring of 1848. He had previously suffered occasionally from dyspeptic symptoms. Any particular imprudence in diet was apt to be followed by the appearance of one or two pustules of *acne rosacea*, which, going through a tedious course, would leave an indelible scar. As their seat was commonly upon the nose, this was very annoying; they finally disappeared after the use of Fowler's arsenical solution. Early in May, 1848, while attending the meeting of the medical association, held in Baltimore, symptoms were pres-

ent which directed attention to the kidneys, and the urine being examined under the microscope, blood globules were detected in it. He returned home feeble and dispirited. A slight febrile movement existed in his system, the skin was sallow, easily perspiring, the digestive organs much deranged, the bowels being constipated and the evacuations both scanty and unnatural in appearance. Occasionally slight puffiness would be noticed about the eyes, the urine however repeatedly and carefully examined, exhibited no traces of albumen. Under the judicious care of his physician, Dr. J. M. Smith, he gradually recovered. The recovery was not, however, perfect, his complexion remained sallow, and he was easily fatigued; yet his appetite was good, and he indulged it to an imprudent extent, eating largely and rapidly, and frequently too of indigestible food.

In the spring of '50, toward the termination of his period of hospital duty, his health again failed him, and he sought its renewal by a temporary absence in Europe. He returned, invigorated, to the performance of his duties; still it was becoming more and more evident to his friends, that some serious and deep-seated disease was sapping the foundations of his constitution. He was always somewhat emaciated, and at times his appearance

would be exceedingly bad. His complexion, usually pale, would assume a deep dingy yellow tinge; his gait would be unsteady, and his usual animation would desert him. Again, he would rally and regain his customary appearance and cheerfulness.

In the spring of '53, immediately subsequent to his appointment to the chair of practice of physic in the University Medical School, we have seen that he delivered an extra academical course of lectures on the diseases of the urinary organs; at the same time he was performing duty at the New York Hospital and giving clinical lectures there. Again at the old period in May, his strength failed him, and the 1st of June found him exhausted. His disease assumed the form of intermittent fever; the paroxysms recurring daily. He would have a chill, followed by smart fever and terminating in profuse perspiration. As he had previous to the attack, several times, in visiting a patient in New Jersey, passed through a district infested with malaria, he attributed his disease to that cause. It however resisted all the usual anti-periodics—the paroxysms still continuing to recur despite the free use of quinine, arsenic opium, &c. In the interval of the paroxysms he was enabled to ride or even walk out, but his strength was greatly impaired. A singular phenomenon gradually manifested itself. Glandular swellings in

both axillæ made their appearance, and slowly increased. These swellings were evidently larger during the paroxysms, and as they passed off, the swellings evidently somewhat subsided. Still through all, the preparation for his winter course of lectures went on. About the 1st of July he went to Newburg, on the Hudson River, to see if he might not be benefited by change of air. He still, however, twice a week, would come to town, to see his patients or deliver a clinical lecture at the college. Finally—giving up altogether the attempt to work, he went to Sharon Springs. Here his fever left him, and gaining strength he was enabled to make an extended tour, visiting the White Mountains, and the residence of his wife's family at Gloucester. He returned to the city on the first of September apparently quite recovered. As the paroxysms of ague had become less frequent, the swellings in the axillæ diminished, and finally altogether disappeared.

Somewhat to the surprise of his friends, he bore the fatigue of the winter session of the college exceedingly well, making himself clearly and distinctly heard by a large class; lecturing was a labor of love, and he seemed the better for it. As the spring came round, however, he again began to lose ground. As early as the latter part of February he

had a single paroxysm of his ague. In March it recurred several times. Yet he still persisted in performing his duties at the Hospital. To rouse his enfeebled energies, he would, just previous to making his visit, eat a few oysters and take a cup of strong coffee, which, by the way, had never previously agreed with him, and thus stimulated, he would get through his duties. As the spring advanced he became worse, his strength and flesh fell off, the chills with fever and perspiration recurred more frequently, until finally in the latter part of May, forced to yield, he called on Dr. J. M. Smith to complete for him the last few days of his service at the Hospital. Hoping to find in change of air the benefit he had previously experienced, he went on the first of June to Massachusetts, visiting Springfield and Northampton. Disappointed in the hoped-for benefit, he went on the 20th of the month to Albany, and two days afterward left for Sharon Springs. Here he passed five weeks, gradually growing worse. The chills, at first regular in their daily recurrence, came on now at irregular intervals. Two often occurred on the same day. The swellings in the axillæ had become large, and evidently contained matter. The emaciation was extreme, his appetite, heretofore remarkably good, had failed; a new symptom, the occasional rejection of his food, made

its appearance, and for the last eight or ten days of his stay he was confined to his room. In this condition he was found by a medical friend, who was visiting the springs, and who advised an immediate return to his home in the city. Attended then by his wife, the constant companion of his illness, and accompanied by the medical friend whom he had accidentally met, Dr. S. again returned to New York. He was now seen by his former physician, Dr. J. M. Smith, together with Drs. Bliss and Ludlow. Besides the symptoms mentioned above, his complexion had assumed a greenish yellow hue, his skin was cool, dry and harsh, and his feet were slightly œdematous; his appetite was feeble, capricious and irregular, and on examination, his urine exhibited a marked quantity of albumen. The abscesses in the axillæ were opened by Dr. Buck, and exit given to a small quantity of unhealthy pus.

The efforts of his medical attendants for his relief were unsuccessful. His stomach became less irritable, but he gained no strength. After remaining in town a fortnight, urged by the restlessness of disease, and against the advice of his medical attendants, he went again to Gloucester. He bore his journey well, and, for a few days, flattered himself he was better; but his increasing weakness soon undeceived him, and he felt that his doom was sealed.

Writing on the 3d of September to Dr. Smith, in a hand that gives evidence of his failing powers, he says: "A few days since I took ether, and had the abscesses laid open freely; ever since that time the pus has a *urinous odor*. It no doubt is throwing off urea. Bowels regular, urine as usual. I am able to take a champagne glassful of London porter during the morning. I am very careful in my diet. I begin to relish animal food better than I did. I shall remain here quietly for the present, remembering the devoted kindness of my New York friends, especially my kind physicians, and endeavoring to resign myself to the will of that Great Being who holds my destiny in his hands." A day or two afterwards, yielding to the wishes of his friends, he returned to New York to die.

Heretofore nothing has been said regarding Dr. Swett's religious belief; but we have reached a period of his history in which that belief was his chief consolation and support. His parents were Unitarians, and had educated him in their own faith. He was well versed in Scripture, and was skilful in the arguments by which his sect supported their tenets. As he grew older, it is probable that his Unitarianism was gradually merged into a philosophical theism, yet to this remnant of faith he clung with tenacity. "Have I done any thing," he writes in his journal,

“to advance my moral character since I have been in Paris? Nothing. Have I retrograded? I fear I have; but with all my professional advantages, and who can boast of more, shall I neglect what I ought to value more than all—myself? O God! may I, by a frequent contemplation of thy perfections and of my own duty learn to improve my heart in piety and virtue!” Dr. Swett’s mother died in June, ’42. In the last few years of her life, she had found reason to change her religious views, and became a sincere and devoted member of the Presbyterian Church. Naturally anxious on account of the religious welfare of her son, and concerned at the effect of her former teachings, she repeatedly wrote to him upon the subject. Dr. Swett was tenderly attached to his mother. After her death, her testament lay for years upon his table; it occupied a particular spot, and he was uneasy and disturbed if by any accident it was displaced. He had placed great reliance upon her judgment, and the letters which she had written him, as well as her last wishes, made a deep impression upon him. After his first serious attack in 1848, his own health had never been robust; he looked upon himself, if not already suffering under Bright’s disease, as having a strong tendency to it. He observed to one of his friends, during his illness, that he had never examined a

patient at the Hospital, suffering under albuminaria, without the thought recurring, that he himself was to be carried off by that disease. Under such influences the grounds of his religious opinions became the subject of serious and earnest thought; and the result of his inquiry was, for the last year of his life, a full belief in the doctrine of the atonement and in the divinity of the Saviour. The time was now come which tested the sincerity of his belief, and showed the reliance which he placed upon it.

After the Doctor's return from Gloucester, he was decidedly weaker, and it was evident that the fatal event could not long be postponed. He was fully aware of his situation. In spite of the ultimately fatal nature of his complaint, his recovery on previous occasions had heretofore buoyed him up with the hope that he might once more meet his class in the lecture-room; but he was now conscious, both from his own sensations and from the candid admission of his physicians, that he could not many days survive. The conviction brought with it no fears—perhaps, no regret. He was prepared alike to live or die. He emphatically declared that he had no fear of death; that he had an entire reliance upon the atonement of the Saviour. He regretted that “he had not previously united himself to some evangelical church. A dislike of attracting notice

to himself, and a wish to wait until more robust health would leave no possible imputation upon his motives, had alone prevented him. On the whole, he preferred the Episcopal Church, but he was not convinced of the truth of all her dogmas. The apostolical succession could not be proved. He was not sectarian in his views; his charity was large enough to embrace all true believers in Christ." On Tuesday, the 12th of September, he received the communion from the hands of the Rev. Dr. J. A. Spencer. The night but one preceding his death, when immediate dissolution seemed impending, he desired his wife to read to him the 15th chapter of the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. At its conclusion, he remarked, "What a glorious chapter! The sting of death is sin. To one who has a full faith in the atonement, death has no sting. None," he emphatically repeated. On Sunday noon, he took a final leave of his family. Beckoning one, who shared with his wife the task of watching beside his dying bed, to take his hand, he said, "My old and tried friend, we must soon part, but I hope for a short time. I hope we shall meet in Heaven. I could have wished," and he gently pressed the hand which he held, "to have lived to see you a member of some Christian church." He made some remarks to his family, and shortly afterward re-

requested some morphine should be given him. His friend objected, "Was not his mind clear, and was he not free from pain?" He assented. "He had no pain; but there was a sensation of sinking and oppression which he supposed was the immediate precursor of death, and from which he sought relief. He had said all he wished to say; he had taken leave of his family; he had no further commissions to have executed." It was agreed to give him such a dose as might afford him some relief, and yet not be sufficient to cloud his intellect. He took accordingly five drops of Majendie's solution of the sulphate of morphine. It had a good effect, and he thenceforth expressed himself as perfectly easy. During the afternoon and evening, he slumbered for the greater part of the time. During the night, he exclaimed, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." * He remained for a time quiet, and without speaking, suddenly, there was a slight twitching about the muscles of the mouth, and all was over.

A careful post-mortem examination made by Dr. Isaacs, revealed changes which from the symptoms during life had been anticipated. The kidneys were

* 23d Psalm, v. 4.

smaller and harder than natural, and the secreting tubes of their cortical portion diminished in number and denuded of their epithelial lining. The liver, too, was somewhat fatty, and in the second stage of cirrhosis; some small purulent deposits on the upper surface of the organ, as well as some which existed beneath the costal pleura, seemed to indicate that he had been the subject of phlebitis.

Dr. Swett's understanding was clear and comprehensive, his judgment sound; he was a careful and patient observer, and a devoted and conscientious lover of truth. He was energetic and persevering in what he undertook, his passions were moderate and under the control of his reason, and he possessed in a high degree that almost instinctive recognition of truth and propriety quite independent of the mere power of reasoning, to which we give the name of common sense. The soundness of his judgment and the moderation of his views were shown in the conduct of his ordinary affairs as well as in his professional career. With the greater part of the time a very moderate income, his expenditure was always sufficiently liberal, and yet within his means; he never involved himself in debt, and after giving in his last will a handsome legacy to the Society for the benefit of the widows and orphans of medical men, he still left his family a moderate competence.

His love of truth, the care with which he guarded himself against all undue leaning or bias, was a marked feature in his character. It was not merely with him the instinct of the gentleman, the avoidance of the acted or spoken lie, but a principle which pervaded his whole life and influenced his conduct. In relating a case or giving an opinion he would not only state what was true, or what he believed to be true, but he would disdain to round off with a phrase those points on which he was ignorant or on which his observation had been imperfect. "Guard yourself against envy," he said to a friend, "it will not only impair your happiness, but it will distort your views, you will be unable to see things as they are, and it will spoil your whole moral character." He was fond of music, but had no skill in it. He had, too, a love of painting and sculpture, and his criticisms on the works of art he saw abroad, as contained in his journal, seem just and appreciative. With all this he had little imagination, and no love of poetry. Byron was the only poet whom he read with pleasure.

Dr. Swett's business was principally that of a consulting physician. He never obtained much general practice, perhaps he did not seek it. His manner was not such as to win him general popularity. With strangers or indifferent persons, he was com-

monly cold and reserved, sometimes even abrupt; but when in the society of those with whom he was intimate, and when in a genial humor, there could be few companions more amusing; full of anecdote, ready at retort—sparkling with puns, his coldness and reserve vanished completely.

Another of his traits that must not be passed over in silence, was his kindness of heart. His was not alone the ready charity, which seeks the easiest mode to relieve itself from an unpleasant emotion, but a thoughtful and considerate kindness which carried out deliberately, plans deliberately formed. Were not the circumstances too recent, and the names too readily traced, anecdotes could easily be given which showed a delicacy of feeling of which few are capable. Perhaps of all his qualities this the most endeared him to his friends, and made him loved best by those who best knew him.

APPENDIX.

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION, BY DR. ISAACS.

THE body was extremely emaciated, and exhibited a tendency to run into rapid decomposition. Sinuses existed in each axillæ, resulting from suppuration in lymphatic glands. The discharge from them was thin, serous, and of a highly urinous odor.

The abdomen on being opened contained about half a pint of serum. The kidneys were smaller than usual; the capsule, somewhat congested, adhered with considerable firmness to the body of the organ, so that its substance was necessarily torn, in a careful attempt to separate it. The surface of the kidney was pale, slightly irregular, rough, and non-vascular. On cutting open the kidneys they were found to be much harder and firmer than natural; the cortical substance was of a slightly yellowish color, the pyramids seemed for the most part to have been obliterated, or at least were distinctly visible in very few places. The mucous membrane of the pelvis of the kidneys was slightly thickened.

On microscopic examination, the secreting tubes in the cortical portion of the kidney, were found to have been extensively destroyed or to have disappeared; those which were left had lost their epithelial lining, and of course with

it their secreting power. The capillaries of the malpighian bodies were thickened, and the fibrous matrix of the kidney much increased. The malpighian bodies were generally in close apposition with each other, which might probably be explained by the increased growth and pressure of the fibrous tissue upon the tubes, &c., causing their obstruction, and thus allowing of the approximation of the malpighian bodies. The vascular plexus of *veins* on the *surface* of the kidney was almost entirely destroyed, and from the compression necessarily made upon those in the *substance* of the organ, many of them must have been deprived of their functions or even removed by absorption, thus explaining the presence of albumen in the urine. On the surface of the kidneys were several round white masses, which, on minute examination, were found to consist of oil globules with disintegrated and imperfect epithelium.

The urine taken from the bladder was alkaline, and deposited a copious white sediment, which consisted of renal and vesical epithelium and of oil globules. The mucous membrane of the bladder was slightly thickened.

The liver was larger than usual, of reddish brown color, contracted and irregular on the surface in two or three places, where it also exhibited a somewhat granular appearance, which was more marked in the interior of the organ. It might be said to have been in the second stage of cirrhosis.

Under the microscope the hepatic cells contained more oil globules than usual, and the cellular tissue was much more abundant than in the healthy condition. Some small round white spots, under the peritonæum, of the upper surface of the liver, as also some which were observed underneath the pleura costalis, of the left side, were found to consist of small deposits of pus; this was proved by the

appearance under the microscope of pus globules floating in a transparent fluid, exhibiting nuclei when acted on by acetic acid, and by the fluid gelatinizing when mixed and stirred with caustic ammonia.

There was about a pint of serum in the left pleural cavity, and somewhat less in the right. The lungs were perfectly healthy, with the exception of a very small spot at the apex of each, which seemed to contain obsolete tubercle.

The heart seemed rather more flabby than usual, but was otherwise healthy.